

*a dead spot of light
magazine*



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Introduction

The 26th edition should be or could be placed under the banner of: “the ever-nagging AI and how these have turned all on its head.” The writing has received a considerable amount of polish, but none of the reviews were written by an AI. The structure of my Git repository, where the files are contained, has seen a massive overhaul. There are now ways to build the magazine in various formats—something I had been experimenting with. It now looks much better and will make things easier for me in the future. And so on and so forth. I could go on for quite a while.

Am I sceptical in regard to AI? Sure. I used two variants for this magazine: Claude Sonnet 4 and GPT5. Each of these has their strengths and weaknesses.

The view counter over at the Internet Archives still does not work properly, but I will add some interviews in future editions again. But the whole direction will see a shift soon. With a homepage as an accompanying publishing platform, I have more ways to get things done and to the public.

Some words about some reviews:

Voluptas: It started as a review of their 2025 release, but

I then thought it would be best to polish also the older versions. That was much more work to do as expected, and also the 2025 exists in two variants here, of which only the better one is published.

Cloistral: I polished the older reviews and the wrote some more. Things like that happen at times.

Betsy Lee: The “No Evil” series on YouTube is great and you should watch it. Over a decade and still offering mindboggling stories.

There will be one more edition of the magazine this year, I think, but I really need some sun and some warmth right now. This bleak and slightly cold weather around here, I live on a Graveyard with a ferry, is really starting to wear me down.

What else? There will be some programming done by me and some proper analysis of the metal genre be done soon. I have all the proper stuff around here, and then this genre will have something no other genre has: a proper visualization of its history. Still, a good amount of work needs to be done, but I am really looking forward to it.

Since people approached me again and again, whether they can support me, you can

<https://www.patreon.com/c/oneyoudontknow>

\$1—that's the one and only tier. There won't be any other. It would be nice to pay for a proper IDE and not always out of my own pocket. And through this I could also buy more releases and support other bands. But only pay if you have a buck to spare—only then and under no other circumstances. This variant of my magazine will always be free and available at the Internet Archive. Funny side note: Patreon wants me to add social sites, of which I have none. Neither under my pseudonym nor under my real name. I also do not have WhatsApp and that stuff.

And yes, I like my Linux smartphone. There is no Google stuff on it.

Feedback would be nice. You can send it here: oneyoudontknow@posteo.net

I hope you find some joy and inspiration from the odd lines that I have written in this magazine.

Next edition? around Christmas 2025, I think.

thorsten // oneyoudontknow

Sources of the images:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vanitas_Still_Life_MET_DT5616.jpg

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Reviews

Betsy Lee – Wayfaring Reprise

I know it. Oh, how I know it. Though it escapes me since when I know it, but it is a darn long time, I tell ya. Years and years have passed. And years and years, neither the music nor the animation have lost any of their fascination. Yes, animation. The music of this one short track on this release is taken from a longer animation. There, the song is used to amplify a scene through its very particular kind of music.

Should you watch it?

Sure. Though be warned.

You will only see, but you won't understand.

You will only watch, but cannot grasp.

You will hear, but it will escape you.

You will be a wanderer in a different world. A world that does not explain anything to you, but which demands of you to pay attention. To look at the nuances. And you do need to do some research and find things out for yourself, because no one will hold your hand.

You see the images, but you lack the code. The words. The vocabulary. The ideas. All the (visual) expressions which have seen the light of day since at least 2012. Yes, this barrier or chasm cannot be negotiated away. “No Evil”, this is the name of the series, dates back so many years. And it is of a kind that is equally intriguing as it is confusing as it is distant.

So what about the music? It is a take on “Wayfaring Stranger”. It is the last chorus as well as a refrain from one version; at least to my knowledge and research. There is nothing cheerful to be found in this interpretation. Just compare it with the version by Johnny Cash and you will immediately recognize the emotional intensity expressed here. Care and devastation combined in a single short track, and all accompanied by the minimal play of a string instrument. Silent breaks further amplify the accentuated expression of the lyrics and the way it is all perceived. And in the background, a tension is created by a trill of high-pitched notes. Anxiety meets an expressed sadness. All of that in a mere seventy-eight seconds. And despite the minimalism, the flow of the voice is able to amplify the scenery in which it is sung in the video immensely.

Yes, some may stick up their nose about such a short track, but it is worthwhile to experience it as well as the video from which it is taken. But in order to fully appreciate it, it is better to start at the beginning and to start the adventure from there. It is a trip worth taking.

Blackwater Funeral – Funeral For A Friend

Twenty minutes of music distributed over the amply entitled tracks “I” and “II” are offered here. Funeral doom metal is the genre on this release and the listener is to expect a brew of minimalism and dark atmospheres. Not sinister or depressing, but something dark and bleak. In a similar tone falls the cover artwork. A picture drenched in sepia colours, while a grave with some flowers, can be seen. There are no bystanders, and the funeral has already taken place.

Leaving the visual aspects aside, the music comes with the possibility of an “endless spin”, which means that the motif with which it opens, in the first track, is also the one with which the second one ends. In between, a mixture of acoustic guitars, funeral doom metal or (faster) death metal inspired riffs can be found. What may come as a

surprise is how nearly half of the opener is played in this acoustic kind of way. Which means that only after the limited play of the acoustic guitar, the distorted guitars offer the kind of music those with a liking for funeral doom metal experience some intensity and heaviness they long for. Though, one should not get one's hope up, because also this other set of guitars is equally limited and reduced. Repetition and minimalism is a core aspect of this release.

Due to or despite all that, the music too progresses forward in a slow and steady kind of way. The two tracks have a similar atmosphere and concept, which finds expression in the way that one picks up ideas of the other one. The riffs, the atmosphere, and the style are not that different from each other, which translates into a predictable pattern in terms of the character of it all. There are few astounding elements that would help to create a lasting fascination for the music. Some words need to be said about the vocals. These are kind of deep growling, which have a comparably small part in the overall scheme of things; considering the combined length of the tracks.

“Funeral For A Friend” is a somewhat odd title, when you think about it. And it never truly feels that kind of depressive or emotional as one would expect from such a

topic. While the music is somewhat dark and minimalist, it never truly translates into such a state of emotion. It is just a standard and basic performance by the one and sole musician behind this project. The music flows in a predictable kind of way and offers not much in terms of music.

Claudie Mackula – Time • Stars • Universe

Three loosely coupled words appear as the title of the release by the Canadian musician Claudie Mackula. And even though it might immediately point one in a certain musical or conceptual direction, for instance towards the dark/space ambient type, what has actually found its way on this release is of a much different sort.

Finger-picking, a guitar, and a piano are some elements with which this release opens. One minute, in a playful to and fro between these, is how the listener is introduced to her approach. The humming of her voice add a certain warmth to it all, while the play of the piano reminds of rain drops on a summer day: an unpredictable pattern of splashes and drops; as banal as it is captivating, but still somehow intriguing. The performance is simple, but

well-balanced. There is no musical extravaganza, even though finger-picking might suggest as much. A focussed, experienced and thought through performance is laid out in the opener, and it continues this way throughout the rest of the album.

With guitars generally setting the tone and guiding the listener through each of the compositions, some additional elements work as counterpoints or facets to amplify certain moments. In the opener it is the use of keyboards and in the third track a piano does this job. And their share contributes to the flow of the music through varying emotional landscapes and intensities. Especially “State of Mind” has a nice flow and atmosphere. It is not only the sound, but also the playfulness of the motif expressed by the piano that is really captivating. And even though the similarity between Claudie Mackula’s performance and the “Amélie” soundtrack might be a bit of a stretch, at times the spirit or the intention appears to be on equal footing; see the scene in which “Amélie” throws the stones and compare it with this track.

“Time • Stars • Universe” contains surprisingly lofty music considering the topics presented in these three words. The music is in a gentle and contemplative flow. No in-

terruptions, stark breaks, no sudden introduction of new sounds or elements and also no “real” vocals. It is like laying on the back and watching the stars. Each of the three tracks attempts to portray a facet of this enormity, and to possibly even encapsulate a spark of it into a tiny piece of music. This is not done in a mere and conventional kind of way, because her songwriting is a step out of the realm of the conventional. It is her subtle approach which introduces an unexpected dimension into the performance.

At just under fifteen minutes, the album offers a brief yet captivating reflection on the vast topics of time, stars, and universe. A nice and contemplative piece of instrumental music.

Cloistral – Նվիրվածություն

It is not often that a review starts with a translation of track titles, but considering that this band is from Armenia and their native tongue was used here, it sounds like a good idea to do so:

Հետևանք - Consequence/Result

Ոչ մի սպասում - No waiting/Not waiting at all

Նվիրվածություն - Dedication/Devotion

Է - Is (third person singular of “to be”)

... with the help of Claude AI.

A glance over this list does not reveal much about what to expect here, does it? Yet a description of it would be that the concept is all about textures. It is about filling a space or a room, which makes sense since it was live recorded in Yerevan, Armenia between 2015 and 2016 by the sole person behind this project. The experience must have been rather intense, at least judging from the sounds that are offered here. One really wonders what the venue might have looked like back then and how many people might have attended it. Four tracks have found their way to this recording, and they offer together nearly thirty minutes. Interestingly enough, the longest track nearly breaks the eleven-minute mark, while the shortest barely reaches five. Each of the tracks has a dense layer of drone or ambient in the background, while on top of it, playful elements work as counterpoints. Of course, the overall setting is varied with each new song, but the basic concept remains a constant. It is as a captivating experience as it is atmospheric.

Already the opener comes with a dark setting. A row of high-pitched notes works as a counterbalance to the haunting drone foundation of the track, and thanks to this it feels rather easy-going and maybe even slightly uplifting. Matters are different in terms of the second track with its dark and industrial touch. Noise elements and a deep and dark ambient layer create the vivid image of a zone of some kind of large scale manufacturing. Nearly nine minutes of various stages of sounds need to be braved by the listener here. However, matters become only more intense after that. Even though the listener leaves the inhuman spheres of the factories behind, a slightly shrill and anxiety-creating drone texture takes over in the third track. Maybe some would associate it with various intensities of the howling of the wind, while others might be tempted to point to some kind of space travel. The album concludes with a minimalist dark ambient track, whose elements bring up memories of lifelessness and melancholy. But only in the first half of the ten-minute piece, because after that some kind of space ambient with a multitude of layers of keyboards over drone textures appear.

Not even the cover artwork could escape the darkness of the music. Cloistral used a framed monochrome picture of a mountainous area for this release and this is a fitting

representation of the musical elements. The underlying currents of dark ambient or dark textures evoke images not too far from that of the cover artwork. However, not all drowns in darkness and one could also point to the music as dreamy, slightly melancholic, occasionally rhythmic, always distant and somewhat alien. The result is both challenging and strangely beautiful.

Cloistral – **Զուգահեռներ**

It is not often that a review starts with a translation of track titles, but considering that this band is from Armenia and their native tongue was used here, it sounds like a good idea to do so:

Ծագում - Origin/Beginning

Անկում - Decline/Fall

Լքվածություն - Abandonment/Desolation

...ա - ...a (incomplete word/fragment)

Աչքերի տխրություն - The Sadness of Eyes

Ընդունում - Acceptance/Admission

Լքվածություն (այլ տարբերակ) - Abandonment/Desolation (another version)

... with the help of Claude AI.

The album title “Չուզահեռներ” translates to “Parallels” and several parallels can indeed be found: again there is still only one behind this project and again this is a live recording done in Yerevan, Armenia, in 2016.

There are significant differences on multiple levels compared with the debut release Նվիրվածություն. Even the cover has more to offer. What had been a picture of a monochrome landscape, can now be divided into three parts or segments that appear clear-cut from each other. Something greyish with rocks at the very bottom, then a strange red-orange grass and finally some kind of blue mountains in the distance. This increase in facets can be found in the music as well. There is less of the dreamy ambient and drone mixture, whose style lacked a considerable amount of concreteness, and is now more of ambient and noise elements with a different focus.

Clear conceptual separations have given way to an approach that merges elements together. Due to this, it is fair to say that on the one hand the music has become more complex, but on the other the music has been bereft of elements of its character. What do I mean by that? Well, it is not as easy as before to pick a certain track for its atmosphere, because the ideas now appear jumbled

up together. One may therefore prefer certain sections over entire compositions, which feels like a step backwards. And even though it the atmosphere appears to warmer, it is also more confusing and maybe even less accessible. It is richer, but with it comes a lack in clarity. What has remained is a distinct level of melancholy.

The reduced length of compositions can also be noted, and maybe that is also a reason why the music feels tighter and more intense. While the impact of noise elements is one aspect, the shift in the warmth of the ambient facets is another. These break out of the bleakness that dominated the debut release and create on **Չուզահեռներ** a clear counterpoint. It is difficult to give a verdict of the quality of these two outputs, because they differ considerably from each other. It all comes down to personal preferences.

Cloistral – **Որպես ջուր**

It is not often that a review starts with a translation of track titles, but considering that this band is from Armenia and their native tongue was used here, it sounds like a good idea to do so:

ՀԱՆՃՆՈՒՄ (Handznum) - "Surrender" or "Submission"

ԱՅՐՈՒՄ (Ayrum) - "Burning"

ՇԻՏԱԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ (Shitakutyun) - "Sincerity" or "Frankness"

ՈՐԱՎԵՍ ԶՈՒՐ (Vorpes jur) - "Like Water"

... with the help of Claude AI.

With translations clarified, let's dive into this peculiar electronic journey. **ՈՐԱՎԵՍ ԶՈՒՐ** was released in 2019, and is a Live recording made in Yerevan, Armenia in 2018. It contains four tracks and roughly twenty minutes. The genre is electronic music, and of a rather peculiar kind. There is nothing definite or predictable in the approach or concept, as each composition has its own unique character.

ՀԱՆՃՆՈՒՄ opens this release with nuanced chord progressions, which have a slightly whimsical undertone, as if they had just sprung from a children's movie. While other drone textures take over the longer the track progresses, it is still allowed to lurk in the background as a kind of undercurrent. The remaining tracks follow suit and already in the second track the music is definitely darker and more inspired by industrial music. The progression and the atmosphere become bleaker and maybe even a bit more

distant. From thereon the listener is elevated to fly over the bleakness of the landscape and to soar high in the skies by the third track. This is thanks to its dreamy ambient motif, which only towards the end receives some intense counterpoints. And if anyone has thought it could not get any weirder, the final track will prove this person wrong. Eerie soundscapes make up the track and due to the way these are intertwined and remain somewhat distant they set a slightly confusing final point to this release.

Dreamy music, slightly melancholic, occasionally rhythmic, always distant, and somewhat alien, but should not be too surprising considering the band name. Որպես ջուր has an interesting vibe and atmosphere, thanks to the increase in tension in the drone/ambient textures throughout the release. While the general idea of the music might give the idea of contemplation and introspection, the repetitive structure prohibits this in some respect. In a cloistral, you are bound to listen, but destined to remain impotent. Things are, things progress, but only in the sense of a spectre, something that would fill the void.

Each of the compositions is different, comes each with a definite set of nuances, has therefore a slightly unique touch, but still enough distinctive characteristics. Experience it,

but maybe not in broad daylight. For optimal immersion, a dark cave with expensive audio equipment might be ideal. More practically, a dark room, comfy chair and thick red wine should suffice.

Cloistral – **Լույսի քանակը**

“Լույսի քանակը” is another live performance, but may be the last of the lot that has seen a release over the years. One thing is certain, this one is different, and different on numerous levels. The tracks have become shorter, and this is hardly surprising considering that there are eight tracks and only a bit more than twenty minutes in length. Some pieces are not even two minutes long. What had been proper meals, have now become no more than tiny snacks.

But there is of course more to it. In case someone listens to the releases in order of their release date, then similarities between these impose themselves on the listener. On the 2022 one are the same dark ambient and drone textures like they could be found on earlier recording. Some of the more intense and noisy moments make an appearance as well. Even the space ambient sounds have a presence

on this, but in either case the music feels cut off and not fully developed. A shift appears with the introduction of a previously unused type of electronic beats that add a dynamic note to some tracks. However, even these feel restrained due to the lack of length of the songs, because what is there to explore when some of these offer less than two minutes?

What we have here is a collection of snippets of ideas. While there may be something hidden amongst these, one cannot help but feel somewhat tired by the fast switches between the tracks. There are hardly any moments in which the music feels properly developed and brought to a level equal to the earlier live recordings. One can even go so far as to question the validity of this release on the whole. What good is music that lacks the ability to captivate the listener and to properly develop an atmosphere? I do not think that it is actually necessary to provide an answer here.

Kobaryo – Windows 10000

A bloody absurd release. And then there is the music. An incomprehensible bombardment of noise and sound.

Kobaryo is not known for calm and predictable and sedated and kawaii music, but the audacity of the presentation here pushes all to new levels. 2:21 are offered here. With part of the 2:21 played at a dazzling 10000 bpm. Yes, that is what is happening here. A freaking 10000 bpm speedcore rampage. Bang your head to that, pal. It is like “Last Days of Humanity” on steroids and without the grindcore and goregrind stuff; but you get the idea ... probably ... or not.

But aside from that? With a fanfare to open the games to the excruciating audio madness, an annihilation of all sanity paves its way with the advent not of Santa Claus, but an incomprehensible wall of violent electronic beats. One oscillating, merciless sound lays waste to the lands like the shock waves of a nuclear explosion. This track does not take prisoners. All the ideas of violent and chaotic sound elements used by him, the vague and somehow randomly appearing sound samples, are nothing but meagre children’s toys compared with the merciless texture of 10000 bpm. It is a crazy experience, which maybe even the Outer God Azathoth to point to this dazzling performance as an inch too much.

And do not be mistaken, the short moment of calmness roughly in the middle of the track is just a short inhaling before the final storm, the final barrage of noise and chaos. Well, the music is a kind of speedcore from Japan, with breaks, wildness, and stuff. Of course, this one track is not able to present all the facets that his normal album would, but some of his intention can also be found here. The hard breaks in the flow, the intensity of the music, the aggressiveness of the beats and the dazzling way in which all hinges together.

But why, 10000 bpm? Well, his YouTube channel has reached 10000 subscribers, so in order to celebrate it, he wrote this piece of music. The sky is the limit? Well, here it is rather the threshold of bpm.

Lustre – A Thirst for Summer Rain

Over the years, Lustre has released a plethora of releases. And as can be seen from the title of some of these, they are a bit out of the ordinary routine when it comes to the grim and dark black metal genre: “They Awoke to the Scent of Spring” or “Wonder” or “Blossom”. “A Thirst for Summer Rain” follows in line, and the cover artwork sets

a certain tone for this piece of music. The cover artwork depicts a lush green meadow under brooding clouds, with rain cascading onto shadowy figures, seemingly embodying the album's essence of tranquillity and introspection, and thereby reflecting the interplay between nature and emotion. This raises the question: how much of it has actually found its way into the music?

Only moments into the first track, a warm breeze hovers over the melody and the charming tunes of the keyboard. Their contribution guides the listener over a landscape not too different from the one that decorates this album. And still, those unfamiliar with the band might wonder, at this point, what kind of music would be offered by this band. The genre tags don't really capture what you'll actually hear, even if you know atmospheric black metal or ambient well. "Atmospheric Black Metal/Ambient" are the descriptions attributed to Lustre at the Metal Archives, but these fail to capture the subtle complexity of a release like this. The typical expectations of intense, guitar-driven black metal with pronounced heaviness dissolve within the first moments of the album. Though they do not vanish entirely, their intensity and impact are much lower than what's common in the black metal scene.

A warm and playful keyboard motif sets the stage, and it never really vanishes over the course of the album. It is there to stay. Of course there are guitars and there is a certain level of heaviness, but it is not of a kind that attempts to be dominant or to push the music in a certain direction. Rather, it accompanies the keyboard in a strange kind of way and works as a counterpoint to the loftiness of it all. The same can be said of the vocals, especially as their part has even less of an impact than the guitars. Reduced to a mere sound or noise element in the background, they express the lyrics in harsh and distorted screams. While they maintain their black metal character, their expression shrouds the written parts in mystery.

All tracks are loaded with a soothing atmosphere, which is due to the conceptual focus on the keyboards as well as the calm flow of the melodies. No counterpoints, no hard breaks to introduce a new riff, a new intense motif or an aggressive arrangement. All parts work in a harmonic unity. And strange as this may sound, Lustre's album is as strange a mixture as it is fascinating. It may not quench your thirst for summer rain, but it certainly satisfies any longing for unconventional music.

Myriam Arseneau – Je ne parlerai pas fort

To hide behind a flower does not prevent her from being spotted by a curious reviewer. It is a charming assortment of pieces of music, but similar to the cover the presentation is not entirely sharp and therefore slightly out of focus. “Je ne parlerai pas fort” saw the light of day in 2022 and is performed by a Québécois musician. Six tracks and a bit more than twenty-two minutes are offered. All of these are somewhere between three and four minutes.

Flowers in the foreground, while she remains blurred in the back, this is what can be found on the cover artwork. And even though it depicts a focus on something else than herself, the music is very much the opposite. Also, the painstaking debate about whether it is more of folk, or pop or even chanson should be left open. Rather unquestionable is the fact that a certain dominance of the voice can be found in either of these. Something needs to carry it all and to drive it forth, and such can also be found here. And even though the melody in the opening track attempts to challenge her dominance, over the course of the rest of the album there is no doubt about how the instruments have to take more of a back seat.

The melodies consist of simple arrangements and chords, which are generally quite nicely set up. With the guitars responsible for the baseline of the music, additional instruments like a piano accentuate certain parts of the tracks amply; the opener is a good example of this. The overall mood is rather easy-going and maybe a bit contemplative at times. Maybe someone familiar with French might be able to grasp more in this regard, but as someone unfamiliar with this tongue, only a distant understanding can be offered. It is therefore only the music that is able to “speak”. Sadly, the harmonic dialogue between the guitars and the piano of the first track is not representative of what can be found in the rest of the release. There is no intense to and fro between the instruments and arrangements, there are no surprising elements that would make an appearance. One cannot help but recognize the pleasant flow in the variations of the character of the music. It is indeed necessary to recognize how it guides the listener through somewhat intimate as well as laid back compositions.

It is at times a bit difficult to be really “captured” by the musical image created by Myriam Arseneau. It feels slightly out of focus. And while each of these attempts to be an image shot on the same idea from a different perspective, one cannot help but experience a slight disconnect at times.

Nostatus – Sanan Synty

Finland boasts an endless reservoir of musicians and musical projects. It is therefore not a surprise to see a certain amount of kantele projects pop up as well, since this instrument is of some importance in the country's music scene¹. Nostatus's approach follows into this category as well and presents a mixture of traditional and metal-inspired sounds. The more experimental band Nest from Finland, which I interviewed in an earlier edition², takes a different approach to the use of kantele. Even though both bands have different concepts, they demonstrate how this traditional instrument has found its way into modern interpretations.

On "Sanan Synty" ten tracks and nearly thirty minutes are offered. This makes a weighted average of roughly two minutes and thirty seconds. Yet the main spot takes the opener with its eight minutes and ten seconds. None of the remaining nine tracks exceeds a length of three minutes. This makes for a slightly strange listening experience, since

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kantele&oldid=1294683108>

²<https://archive.org/details/ADeadSpotOfLight...Number15/ADeadSpotOfLightnumber15/>

some compositions are not even two minutes long. As can be imagined, this makes it a bit difficult for a “normal” person to get a hang of the performance. It is not only music that differs considerably in style, due to the instrument, but the lack of coherence in the track length and the occasional bite-size chunks are a challenge. The songwriting’s blend of traditional and modern approaches might challenge contemporary listeners unfamiliar with such departures from conventional patterns. This is not to say that sounds of this sort have no merit, but to emphasize the difficulties that come with such a release.

How can it all be described? Well, a lot of repetition in the motifs and in the singing can be pointed towards. Occasionally, even ritualistic elements spill over into the music, but the appearance of modern instruments dilute their impact considerably. The basic setting consists of a kantele and vocals. Other instruments like drums and an electric kantele add a kind of heaviness and intensity, but they are not always present. As should be clear at this point, there is a kind of ambivalence in the musical character and execution. Sometimes it is rather traditional and “pagan”, then it is modern and “experimental”. Some words need to be said about the vocals: they are like chants, but not like those performed in a Christian church,

for instance. Their expression and character are different and much more earthen and therefore darker. It is also interesting how these appear at times not only in one layer but in several at once, which adds another intensity and gravity to it all. Somehow like in a choir but different; if that makes sense.

The songs are (generally) repetitive, but also somewhat haunting or captivating. Due to an overall slow pace of the riffs or motifs, these create the impression of a kept back process or a leisurely dance that is being evoked here. This comforting steadiness is a welcome deviation, as it is somewhat infuriating at the same time. At times, one longs for a bit more daringness in the presentation. A burst of fast drums or some fast-played kantele with some proper chants would have been a nice counterpoint indeed. Some additional level of experimentation and maybe even some field recordings from the nature could have helped to properly invoke the “pagan” aspect of the concept. A good example of how the kantele and such sound samples go hand in hand, is amply presented by the aforementioned band Nest.

Leaving such arguments aside, there is this impression of actually encouraging the listener to participate and to

join in. How listeners engage remains personal, of course. Despite the distance from its traditional origins, the songs seem to invite participation and create a dialogue with the listener. Nevertheless, quite often it feels like an album that is somehow fallen out of space and time. The sound, the style, and the musical approach are very different from what is commonly being offered. Do I like this release? When I think about music like this then dark chocolate is what comes to mind. You can't eat it in excess, it has a peculiar and refined taste, but at times this deviation from the run-down-the-hill kind of thing, is necessary to properly appreciate all of the "normal" stuff.

Not much has been heard from the band since the release of this album back in 2006. It would therefore not be too far-fetched to point to it as the last presentation of the band's music. Their few old tracks have found their way to YouTube, though.

Oldest Sea – Judith Slaying Holofernes

The single "Judith Slaying Holofernes", released in 2024, as a successor to their 2023 debut album "A Birdsong, A Ghost", offers a different perspective on the music of the

American funeral doom metal band “Oldest Sea”. In two tracks and less than ten minutes, two different sides of the band can be experienced.

“All Shall Love Me and Despair” is a track divided into two parts. It opens with a simple but haunting acoustic motif, which sets the basis for the track. Later, a piano places accentuated counterpoints, while roughly after the middle part of the track drums add a rhythmic layer. This piece follows in spirit the concept of the band, while it deviates from it due to the lack of intensity, since no electric guitars are to be found here. The vocals and their impact are a recurring element, since this is no instrumental piece. With only a few instruments and variations in their play, Sam’s voice adds an important dimension to the music. Her expression of the texts resembles a kind of wailing, which is further fostered by the hollow sound of the voice as well as the reverb added to it. While the opener technically lacks the musical manifestation of funeral doom metal, the spirit as well as the intention are definitely there.

Matters are different for the second track “How Could The Same God”, in which the band enters more familiar grounds: intense metal riffs, harsh screams and a devastating atmosphere. Would it not be for the wailing

or shrieking vocals of Sam, one might mistake this for a different band. Rather short in length, it still offers a considerable amount of facets. First the crushing opening, then a calm break with some samples, while towards the end a conclusion with Sam and a male voice can be found. A bit more length and variation would have been welcome.

This release offers a slightly more atmospherically varied approach compared with the ones on their debut album “A Birdsong, A Ghost”. It attempts to broaden the spectrum, while staying true to their earlier established musical concepts. An uneven but intriguing experiment with dark folk and funeral doom metal.

A video of a 2025 live performance can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=GqWYJyfA>

o u o – Pop en tu cuarto

The cover artwork is odd to say the least. The entire arrangement is odd. ”o u o” is not even trying. All she had done was to take a tiny tiny picture of her, a picture generally used for stuff like passports, and placed this on a keyboard. Of this composition a picture was taken and

it graces as the cover artwork for this release. No text appears. Not even a band name. Nothing. She probably could not be bothered. If you send this release to someone, then this person might wonder, whether this is supposed to be a joke. They might not even bother listening to it. Unconventional would be a mild way to describe this. So why am I reviewing it? “RADIO 5FM”, the fourth track, is such a captivating piece and the video is such a crazy rollercoaster that one simply has to share this with a wider audience. You do not believe me? Well, judge for yourself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXNX7dSTqRs>

Wild. Chaotic. Humorous. It is reminiscent of videos that were uploaded in the early days of YouTube, and which lack the commercial intention that a lot of the stuff has these days. It is just a lot of good old fun. As a Linux user, the dancing penguin is especially appreciated. Once you have watched the video, how do you look at this release, now? This is a rhetorical question. She is toying with you. She is probably laughing at all the responses she gets due to her way of presenting it. Look beyond what you see and do not be influenced by this visual impression. Take a dive into this release.

The opening of the "Pop en tu cuarto" is a synthesizer and vocals driven piece of music. The sound is rather ethereal in character, and it sets up a dreamlike introduction to the things to come. Maybe this is the intention. A dream world is entered. With the second track "TELEVISIÓN AMERICANA", all the track titles appear in caps, this idea is maintained. In it, the overall conception behind the music is revealed. "o u o" plays keyboard driven music, accompanied by the electronic beats and a plethora of additional sound elements is what makes up the tracks. The atmosphere is generally calm and at times even slightly meditative. "RADIO 5FM" is a slight exception to this, due to the track's intense rhythm. It comes with a much tighter and not dreamy at all melody line. Instead, it has catchy and energetic rhythms, which mark a contrast to the rather laid back intentions presented earlier. Electronic beats, the sound of electric guitars, additional sound elements as well as her voice really push it all forward here. This burst in intensity and ludicrous arrangements remains an exception, though. None of the other tracks would even get close to it or even use elements from it in one way or another. And therefore all returns to the state of slightly dreamy music, but with some occasional samples added to it.

Some tags used for this release are: “latin pop”, pop, “alternative pop”, “art pop”, “avant garde”, “experimental pop”, “Mexico”. It is therefore safe to say that this is a kind of pop music from Mexico. Nevertheless, these descriptions alone are not able to convey the experience and her peculiar way of crafting the music. “Pop en tu cuarto” is as strange a release as it is magical. Loaded with a wild and confusing and strange arrangement of ideas, all of these tracks together create a “whole” that is difficult to put into words. Why do you not want to listen to this project and this release? It is beyond me. A splendid and confusing array of sound and arrangements from Mexico.

The cover artwork is so off that I just had to buy it, and I do not regret it for a second.

Recommended tracks: “RADIO 5FM” and “COBARDE”.

Quit – Demo

Quit is a band whose sole release, the one this review is about, saw the light of day in 2015 and nothing has happened or seen of them since. “Funeral Doom Metal, Depressive Black Metal” is how the Metal Archives lists

this band as of writing this review. It is difficult to agree with this assessment, because after a spin or more of this demo, one may wonder where the funeral doom metal is supposed to be or why it would not be enough to simply label it as depressive black metal.

The first track of the release is an excerpt of the “Tears in rain monologue”³. The musical score of the scene introduces the spoken part, while it continues, once it is concluded. What is actually less than fifty seconds in the movie, the part with text, is extended here to nearly three minutes; especially thanks to the musical elements. With the rain in the background, a minimal play by the keyboards and some additional noise elements, the initial moments are reduced to the bare minimum. Stylistically, it sets up a rather melancholic or maybe even depressive atmosphere.

Somehow the second track takes the idea up and one can see, for a short moment, why some people may want to point to this release having in part funeral doom metal elements. A minimalist play of the guitars offers nothing but a small set of musical variation; here in terms of the character and style. This changes around the five-minute

³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tears_in_rain_monologue

mark and black metal blasts take over. All is pushed forward mercilessly, because what had been a small set of chords, whose play is repeated considerably, switches over to something more akin to what is common in the (underground) black metal genre. The overall raw sound of the instruments does its part to further amplify the fast-paced arrangements. It is not destined to stay this way, and the band switches between either of these two approaches. To sum this second track up: it is a mixture of contrasting sounds and characters. With slow paced music on the one side, and aggressive fast-paced one on the other, it represents to a good degree the intentions expressed by the two aforementioned genres. On a side note, the refusal to be limited to mere screams finds expression in clean doom-inspired vocals towards the end; which adds in terms of the atmosphere a nice counterpoint.

The third and last track opens with a sample as well, but this time it was taken from a rather unknown movie: *The Good Night*⁴. Stylistically it follows in the vein of the opener, but the order has been changed a bit. There is first the intense black metal part, while the calmer and rather muted one follows later. Furthermore, the emphasis here is placed more on the black metal elements.

⁴https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Good_Night

A lot of black metal can be found on this release, while calm and minimalist counterpoints help to alleviate some of the intensity. It is raw music with well-performed screams. This demo, though nothing particularly outstanding can be found on it, is actually quite decent.

Stillheten – Nasrani tapes vol. 1

Stillheten from Sweden has not been active for quite some time. Septuagesima was the release prior to this one, and it dates back to 2012. While changes are expected after such a long gap, the similarity between the two cover artworks is surprising. What had been a minimalist sketch has evolved into a detailed photograph. This image, a monochrome picture with a focus on black rather than white, is what greets the listener. A presumably desolate, abandoned or forlorn place somewhere in a forested area or in the outskirts of a settlement. One small thing: there is a small path leading up to the houses and from the downtrodden leaves, one can see that it appears to be inhabited. Furthermore, since the entire path and not only some small specks show clear signs of wear, it indicates that this cottage experiences at least some amount of foot traffic.

And in some respect the music of the opener attempts to follow on this line and create an atmosphere that is somewhat similar to the desolation of the visual imagery. A vague and slightly oscillating ambient texture opens this track, while guitars enter some time later. Though their playing style is reminiscent of traditional Middle Eastern music. The playfulness in the melody is what gives it away to a certain degree. And to venture off into the realm of cliché, there is also the issue of the atmosphere, which is conveyed through the melancholic play of the guitar as well as the vastness opened by the keyboard textures in the background. And even though the play accelerates over the course of the track and the finger play becomes more pronounced as well as similar to a trill at times, the distance, and the desolateness cannot be shaken off. It is a captivating piece of music, which makes it even odder to see it end in such a surprising and unexpected kind of way. It appears to stop in the middle of something and ends there. Something that will leave the listener rather bewildered.

Based on this opening, you might expect the entire release to explore similar themes. Of an expression of desolation, of the evocation of imagery through the means of guitars and dark ambient textures, but the reality is

different and this is how the music progresses in the second track. It is there that the second face of the band on this release is revealed. A face riddled with noise elements, guitar sounds, slightly disturbing or intense atmospheres, but all in all a rather unpredictable presentation. The style of the opener makes a reappearance later, but not in an equal kind of way. Rather, some additional elements and facets have found their way into this approach. Due to this, the impression of melancholy has faded a bit and this reprise of the initial idea feels a bit hollow and off. Also, the later appearance of distorted guitars moves the music into a much different direction.

And even though the last track is again calm and peaceful, the moments in between feel like something difficult to comprehend and understand. These stark contrasts between calm and distorted elements aren't immediately apparent from the opening track. Of course, one could argue that such is already apparent in the image. The desolation on one hand, the frustration of life in such a place on the other — the path suggests presence, but the walls tell only of absence.

One thing remains, and that is the title of this release: *nasrani*. It refers to Christians, and the origins of the word

are Arabic-speaking cultures⁵. How this word and the music fit together is something that remains nebulous and unexplained. This absence of context is reinforced by the lack of additional insights about this release provided on the Bandcamp entry. The band leaves this aspect of the release unexplored.

The band wrote the following on their Bandcamp entry: “Spiritual introspection captured in raw takes by crappy equipment.”

Is this information really something the listener needs to appreciate the music?

Tempestarii – A Constellation of Dead Stars

Four years have passed since the release of the Chaos at Feast album. And one can debate whether this time span and the events that took place in it, had an impact on the band and their way of playing their music. One initial similarity between these two albums has to do with the cover artwork and how each of these show a rhombus. It appears in each case in the same location, but the image

⁵<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Christians&oldid=1294856766>

therein has changed. While the 2020 one shows an Aztec temple in front of a black hole, in 2024 a slithering, large and winged serpent is portrayed in the middle of the image.

Musically, an evolution can definitely be discovered and in a variety of ways. For one, the music on “A Constellation of Dead Stars” is aggressive, merciless and a really intense experience to listen to. A wall of guitars. A wall of noise. A wall that is construed in each of the tracks and which is much more convincing than on the earlier output. This is a step from the 2020 release in which a similar approach can be found, but in terms of the execution and style, this current level feels like an increase on more than a minor scale. And this is not only due to overall approach, but also in terms of the sound and the vocals. If one has to use a word to narrow down the experience on the 2024 performance, then it would be: Relentless. Utterly relentless. But odd as this might sound, it is not entirely correct, due to the way each of the four tracks actually end. There is no intense final burst, there is no brutal barrage or some final crescendo of noise, but a muted and calm ambient part. In other words: Tempestarii celebrate on this release the juxtaposition of extreme contrasts. It is as intriguing, as it is confusing and uncalled-for.

It is difficult to single out a specific track, but the opener has a rather peculiar set of concepts. “Radiant Asunder” starts in a calm and minimalist kind of way, and it takes a minute for the band to get going. From thereon, a wild and chaotic black metal performance is unleashed. It is one riff barrage after another, each wild passage giving way to another similar but equally wild one. With an occasional melody line performed by a lead guitar, the general intention here is an uncompromising performance that is celebrated on a large scale in each of the tracks. A wall of guitars similar to a noise-like wall of sound oscillates throughout the track. On top of it, (howling) vocals with a good amount of reverb add a contrasting, harsh counterpoint. It is a very dense kind of music and offers little space to any other instrument. It is therefore such a surprise that the end of the tracks comes with a calm outro. After all the furore, after all this harshness and all that noise, these sedating moments of quietness add an unexpected spin to this release. Furthermore, this part does not only stretch for a few rare seconds, but actually takes up a considerable length; nearly ninety seconds in the opener. In this case a calm ambient like texture sets a calm basis, while on top of it the sound of (church) bells adds a nuance of a different sort. Not only due to

the atmosphere, but also the shift of the dynamics, it is something bewildering to behold.

And this is the way it continues on this release. First the aggressive and noisy and unrelenting black metal, and towards the end a soothing antidote or counterpoint. Not similar, mind you, but equal in intention and character. The same is true of the black metal parts. Sometimes there are some variations in the breaks, some small deviation from the overarching stylistic concept, but the general direction remains the same and intact and on course. Unrelenting. Merciless. Aggressive.

Some words are necessary in regard to the title. One may go so far and point to each of the tracks as a representation of a point in space and time. A forlorn place, a star, now brought into focus, and that the music is a reflection of the impression that this entails. The post-life existence of the stars, their endless movement in the vastness of space, finds a manifestation. Maybe there is hope for them to have a resurrection, another chance, after another big bang, another realignment of the atoms and molecules. Perhaps this is what has found expression in the stark contrasts of the black metal and the calmness ambient elements. The ferociousness of the existence receives a muted cadence

once the hydrogen has all burned to helium and so on and so forth. But there is still a lingering. There is still a flicker of hope.

“A Constellation of Dead Stars” is an intense release with rather quiet counterpoints. It is as bewildering as it is captivating.

Voluptas – Ved Rums Ende

Ved Rums Ende, the release? Ved Buens Ende, the band? One cannot shake off the similarity between the former from the Czech Republic, and the latter from Norway. To those with some knowledge of unconventional black metal, the similarity not only in terms of the names, but also the music is simply something too much of a coincidence. Casting the name aspect aside for a moment, the songs, while not necessarily similar in style, follow in their intention and conception in line of what had been done by the Scandinavians years ago. Voluptas attempts to be different and to present extreme music with a variety of influences. The opener sets the direction immediately, and the band does not waste time getting started.

However, the way the band sets the stage and introduces their approach brings some issues of its own. “Plísně kosmické” sets certain expectations, and the band finds it difficult to uphold or to adhere to these. Indeed, this rather surprising juxtaposition of saxophone and black metal elements adds a certain easiness to the performance, a nice contrast and playfulness, which steps out of the ordinary routine. Of course, it would not be the first time this instrument has found its way into this genre. In 2000 Carpathian Forest used it on their *Strange Old Brew* release for instance; to name only one example. And while there is a similarity in either case, there is also a reluctance of the band to make use of this instrument on a larger basis and restrict it therefore as a gimmick on a small scale. Strange as it may sound, the opener sets the stage not for the music that follows, but rather as a showcase of the band’s potential or conceptual ideas.

On the five additional tracks *Voluptas* explores a variety of genres: doom metal, black metal with hints towards punk and post-rock. It is a wild set of rhythms and sounds, whose combination is slightly surprising for a band at this stage in their career. This concept is a deviation from the established pattern of extreme harshness in the sound, which is quite common in the black metal genre. Instead,

the focus was placed on getting atmosphere as well as the dynamics right and to provide a broad set of ideas. Like Ved Buens Ende, the idea behind the music and the approach of composing it, can be pointed towards as being on equal footing. On closer inspection, one has to admit that in terms of the actual music, neither output of the Norwegians has much in common with what this band from the Czech Republic presents. The EP of the band from Prague lacks the extreme contrasts and elements, the shrieks, the weird switches in arrangements and sounds. It is stylistically limited and does not dare to walk into the Norwegians' footsteps. This release is rather a nod than a full embrace.

Ved Rums Ende has a level of rawness due to the black metal elements, but these are less prominent. The range in which these sounds have found their place on this recording is balanced out, and neither of the aforementioned genres has too large an impact. This is also reflected in the production, which offers enough room for the instruments to unfold their potential. Therefore, the drums and the bass are able to add their share to the performance. Breaks, solo parts and slight variation in the vocals – shrieks and growls – add their share to prevent monotony from occurring. The playfulness of the elements and in the songwriting is what

makes this album quite enjoyable. Tracks like “Zlo a lesy, žádný kecy!” with the solo guitar parts or “Podzimní” with its prominent bass guitar elements stand out. None of the tracks follow a rigid pattern or rely on simple variations of the same formula. Each track offers distinct dynamics and sounds, unified by an underlying sense of ease and flow. The cohesion is impressive for a band at this stage. More experimentation along the lines of the opener would strengthen the concept and provide better contrast.

Do not be deceived by the opener, while the addition of a saxophone is rather cool, it is not representative in terms of the rest of the album. It is a trip, but not a one you might expect. In the end, one is left a bit confused, which might be the same impression one gets when looking at the cover artwork. A strange image and some strange music.

Voluptas – Towards the Great White Nothing

The invitation expressed in the title as well as in the cover artwork is as intriguing as it is ambivalent. It combines the mystery of an inexplicable place with the basic human curiosity to explore it. The title “Towards the Great White

Nothing” indicates something, hints on something, projects something. Something that is and that might be reached at some point and through some means. This would be one reading of it. Another points into the realm of alchemy and towards “Nihilum album”, Latin for “White Nothing” and, more prosaically, to Zinc oxide. The further emphasis with the use of ‘great’ puts it further into focus and maybe even deepen the mysticism behind it. The question of course is whether the band would take a trip into the depths of potion-brewing, alchemical stories and glances into a time gone by. But the explanation provided here is not without purpose, because now you, the reader, have put to memory the translation for “Nihilum album”. Anyway, Voluptas’ debut album contains only five tracks, which span over a mere length of thirty minutes, but maybe this would be enough to disentangle all that had been laid out in the title of the release.

The aspect of white can be interpreted in various kinds of ways. In regard to the music, there is the facet of white noise as part of the noise genre that comes to mind, of course. Whether the end of the closing track, “Desert Twilight” is exactly that, can (or should?) be left open to debate. Nevertheless, the way the album closes, the utter distortion of the progress of music, the unmistakable

disregard for harmonics and flow of music are altogether an argument that can be used to point into this direction. Sadly, the band from Czechia is not able to create such an atmosphere over the course of all the five tracks. Only in this final part of the music, a counterpoint to what had been presented prior to this is established. This somehow feels like a missed opportunity. A strange hurrah towards an end, a disturbing crescendo to break it all down and drown the listener into a world of white noise. This has not so much to do with the contrast of the end, but how it flows towards it, or how it avoids doing so. By breaking down the evolution in terms of the atmosphere and by avoiding a comparably more daring approach, Voluptas' debut is in the end not always conclusive or convincing. One might even wonder whether a band like Forgotten Silence, with their long history of experimentation, left some trace here. Even the track length, precisely 13:36, feels like a private joke — towards 13:37, but never fully there, only almost “leet.” Probably meaningless, probably stupid, yet once noticed, it's impossible not to grin at it.

... and what about the rest, then?

At its core, the music is black metal. This is how the album opens, and this is also the style the band feels

comfortable with. Raw in essence, cold at heart and unmistakable in expression. What made their debut release slightly different had been cast aside and replaced with a focus on core essences of the aforementioned genre. Hardly any saxophone and no more messing around. While it would be too far-fetched to describe the music as aggressive and overtly intense, some of these characteristics can be found on a larger scale here. Compared to their first EP, one has to acknowledge: the fun times are over and the (black) bleakness has taken command. Already in “Crystalline Key”, the opener, the pace and tone are set. A hollow scream at the very beginning along with an initial intense blast and then the listener is pushed along. The style is modern, progressive, but not overtly daring. A nod towards Karst, a nod towards Enslaved, but not towards Primordial. Why? There is never this intensity of emotion, there is never that intensity of expression. Also, not towards Aenaon. Voluptas likes to keep things at bay, likes to channel it into a different direction.

Their music contains moments of calmness and counterpoints. It is not a “storm” from the beginning to the end and no wall of guitars. The tracks are playful, have a lot of dynamics and well-crafted motives. But as most of them come with a time constraint of around 4 minutes,

the complexity and progressiveness is kept at bay. However, this has no negative impact on the album as a whole, as it is comparably diverse and by no means limited in terms of expressions. The tracks are generally spot on and appear to play with the expectations of the listener at times. Especially as those breaks and switches in dynamics are of a type that cannot be predicted. Leaving the last track out of this discussion for a moment, “Of Gnosis and Agony” meanders around in a melodic kind of way, while the succeeding “Between Terror and Erebus” throws barrage after barrage towards the listener. The opener would be a mixture of these two. Considering that some time passed between their debut release and this one, it feels that some effort had been put into crafting it. A lot of the facets of the compositions appear balanced out and also the instruments are well performed and arranged. The vocals – screams, growls – are a bit muffled occasionally, but this is not much of a problem.

The question remains what had been achieved once the white nothing has been reached towards the end of the release. The last track is not something akin to what Satyricon had added to two of their releases; Rebel Extravaganza and Volcano. In either case, a culmination of the ideas of the preceding tracks into one complex approach concludes

the album in an unexpected kind of way. In regard to the Czech band, matters are a bit different. While there is a certain level of coherence, some stylistic deviations appear uncalled-for - such as the saxophone interludes - and the overall scale feels excessive. It would have been better to get rid of the last track altogether and replace it with something else. Considering the quality and flexibility that can be examined throughout the release, Voluptas should have found no difficulty to come up with some additional tracks and ideas. In this state, "Towards the Great White Nothing" is a bit inconclusive.

Comparing these two releases of the band that have seen the light so far is difficult, because they differ from each other considerably. In style and sound, each of them has its own distinct approach. Yet, this latest output appears to be more mature and better crafted. The black metal part is stronger and atmospheric, though some experimental facets come across as inconclusive. It is nevertheless a good debut album.

Voluptas – Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not

The first track attempts to confuse you, whilst the second one attempts to beat it out of you. A clash of experimental plucking and tormenting of instruments with an aggressive black metal counterpoint would be another way to describe it. With the band's two decade anniversary in 2026 drawing close, their latest, only third attempt is a distilled mixture of their earlier musical approaches combined. And with the musical concept having received a considerable amount of revamping, the only constant over the years has been the band's focus of extreme music which strives to be different. But how does this difference translate into music? What does it feel like to experience it?

The songs maintain an undercurrent of tension, constantly toying with the listener's emotions and creating anxiety about what might come next. Each of the tracks has a distinct sonic character, and attempts to create its own identity through different approaches to intensity and experimentation. This is evident in the two-part opener, with a calmer piece juxtaposed with a more aggressive black metal one. A pendulum comes to mind, swinging between extremes — a motion already set by the first two

tracks. So, what kind of music can be found on this album, and how does it compare to their two earlier recordings?

It all started on “Ved Rums Ende” and it had been a kind of experimental black metal, which was rather standard in terms of aggressiveness. Musically, it stood out due to the unconventional songwriting and the use of a saxophone. With “Towards the Great White Nothing” the tone changed remarkably and the black metal became not only harsher but also more intense. And while the saxophone was only rarely used, noise elements appeared as a surprising new element. Which brings us to this release: which of these facets have found their way in here?

“Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not” combines the musical strains of the two earlier recordings into a unified approach. The saxophone has been given a larger role in the concept, while the impact of noise has been shifted as it is expressed by some instruments instead of being created electronically. Add to this the unpredictable nature of the songwriting, then it should be clear that it is quite an experience to listen to this album. An unpredictable voyage through different levels of intensity and playfulness is one way to describe what is going on here. Examples of this include “Moon Obscured” with its surprising saxophone

ending. Or “Yetzer Hara”, which is the second shortest and the most straightforward track of all of them and offers nothing but unrelenting and fast black metal. This discussion should also include the harsh screams, as well as the good production, which provides the instruments with the proper level of energy and clarity.

A commonly asked question concerns how, or to what extent, one is affected by the music. Regard this release, this cannot be answered easily, but the cover artwork can offer some explanation. A casual glance might reveal only the fine chaotic lines and point to these lightning bolts that were added to this release. Upon closer inspection, thin, vague walls can be discovered, which means that we are looking at a carefully dissected organism and part of its intricate inner structure. It appears to be rather hollow and one can speculate whether it is some kind of plant. The music follows a similar pattern. One can certainly ponder the twists and turns the melody takes, but the music retains its appeal even when appreciated from a distance.

Compared to the audacity of Blut aus Nord’s 2023 release *Disharmonium: Nahab, Voluptas*’ performance is much more tame and less versatile in the songwriting. *Dødheims-*

gard's Black Medium Current is equally different, with its larger array of facets and sounds. Yet one feels the Czech band would fit somewhere between these extremes. Not as playful, not as avant-garde, not as unconventional, but nevertheless very focussed, very intense and versatile. An album worth mentioning outside the experimental spectrum is Mysticum's Planet Satan. This relates to the opening of the second part of 'The Patriarch' and how 'Cosmic Gun' demonstrates equally unrelenting ferocity.

The 2025 release 'Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not' is Voluptas' most mature album to date. It not only expands on earlier concepts, but merges them into a complex array of sounds and atmospheres. These eight tracks beat mercilessly upon the listener's mind, and some listeners may feel slightly exhausted by the album's end. For those seeking genuinely challenging extreme music, 'Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not' delivers with both intricacy and impressive results.